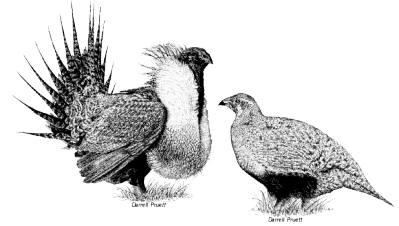


Final Meeting Summary

(Pending SAC Approval in January '09)



Date: October 8, 2008

Meeting: Idaho Sage-grouse Advisory Committee

Location: Idaho Department of Fish and Game – Magic Valley Regional Office

October 8, 2008

In attendance:

In attendance: Donna Bennett* (Owyhee LWG), Lynn Burtenshaw* (Upper Snake LWG), Sam Chandler* (Big Desert LWG), Mark Collinge** (APHIS Wildlife Services), Ken Crane** (BLM), Jack Depperschmidt** (DOE), Arthur Dick* (Shoshone-Paiute Tribe), Dave Ellis* (Challis LWG), Elizabeth Felix* (IDL), Frank Fink** (USDA-NRCS), Nate Fisher (OSC), Jeff Gillan (U of I), Steve Goddard* (Idaho Wildlife Federation; Ada County Fish and Game League), Wendy Green (West Central LWG facilitator – for Gene Gray*), Tom Hemker* (IDFG), Joe Hinson (Consultant to OSC), Doug Howard (North Magic Valley LWG), Ron Kay* (ISDA), Ann Moser** (IDFG), Mark Orme (Caribou-Targhee NF – for Robb Mickelsen*), Rochelle Oxarango* (Big Desert LWG), John Peavey* (North Magic Valley LWG), Tom Perry (OSC), Wendy Pratt* (East Idaho Uplands), Julie Randell* (South Magic Valley LWG), Mike Remming* (Jarbidge LWG), Tom Rinkes (BLM for Paul Makela**), John Robison (ICL for Rich Howard*), John Romero* (ICA), Elena Shaw (BLM, Shoshone Basin LWG), Alison Squier (Facilitator), Joe Terry* (Curlew LWG), Natalie Turley** (Idaho Power), Kendra Womack** (USFWS), and Rich Yankey* (Shoshone Basin LWG).

* Indicates SAC member

** Indicates SAC technical advisor

Introductions and Review Agenda

Tom Hemker welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. Tom asked each person to introduce his or herself. Alison Squier reviewed the proposed meeting agenda and asked if

there were any additional agenda items. John Romero asked that a discussion of a SAC executive committee be added to the agenda if there was time. Lynn Burtenshaw, Chair of the SAC Mitigation/Conservation Subcommittee said that he had a proposed mitigation approach that he would like to present to the SAC for discussion.

Local Working Group and Other Updates

Meeting participants were asked to provide updates about their activities. Following are summaries of information presented by the LWG representatives and others:

- **Mike Remming (Jarbidge LWG)** – Mike reported that the Jarbidge LWG has a new facilitator. They've got 10 new LWG members and are currently in the process of learning together and building trust. For now they've decided to meet every other month. They will be reworking the LWG plan.
- **Tom Rinkes (BLM)** – Tom explained that he is attending for Paul Makela. He said this is his first SAC meeting so he is just here to learn.
- **Dave Ellis (Challis LWG)** – Dave said he didn't have much to report. He said that their group needs solid information on where CCAAs are going so that they can apply that information to their group, and their region, and get a better feel for the potential impacts of a potential sage-grouse listing under the ESA.
- **Wendy Pratt (East Idaho Uplands LWG)** – Wendy reported that the East Idaho Uplands LWG is still working on their plan. She said they got hung up on the livestock section. Although Wendy said she felt this was a good thing since it resulted in the first real dialog within the group. She said that most people want to get past the livestock section but that she'd like to stay there for awhile because the discussion is really valuable. She noted that the group had put forward two funding requests - one for aerial survey work and one for lek search. The group had originally agreed with the SAC's recommendation to do the lek search the first year and the aerial survey the second year after the general location of leks was known. But the group already knows where leks are located in the southern portion of their planning area and would like to fund the telemetry project this year for the southern portion. **[Action: Tom Hemker said he wasn't sure if funding was available but promised to follow-up directly with the LWG to discuss and resolve the question.]**
- **Joe Terry (Curlew LWG)** – Their LWG has been having conversations with Pete Coates on conducting a raven study. The Curlew LWG wanted to know if other LWGs are interested in participating in the study too.
- **Ron Kay (Idaho State Department of Agriculture)** – Ron reported that ISDA is continuing to participate in most of the LWG meetings.

- **Arthur Dick (Shoshone-Paiute Tribe, Duck Valley Reservation)** – Arthur explained that he is Dan Gosset’s replacement and that this is his first meeting and he is here to listen and learn.
- **Sam Chandler and Rochelle Oxarango (Big Desert LWG)** – Sam reported that the Big Desert group is just finishing the livestock part of their plan. He said they’ve changed a few things including the hunting areas for Zones 8 and 6. Sam said that the group wanted to request that they get hunting information for Zone 8 separate from Zone 6. If they had their own information it would help with LWG reporting. As currently delineated the information is inaccurate for their area. Their group is also talking about participating in the raven study. They’ve gone through all the conservation measures and are currently reviewing their plan. **[Action: Tom Hemker will follow-up with the LWG facilitator to further discuss the hunting Zone request.]**
- **Wendy Green (West Central LWG)** – Wendy said she is attending on behalf of Gene Gray. She said the telemetry study has now collared 59 birds to date. Gene’s been collecting GIS data for all the contacts. Of the 1,685 contacts with sage-grouse, 76% have occurred on private land, and 85% of contacts with hens have occurred on private land. Also with funding from the OSC distributed project funds the group is doing another aerator project. They took a Lawson aerator and crunched up a bunch of sagebrush – Wendy reported that the re-growth was amazing. This time they are doing a more scientifically precise project that includes before and after photos and documentation.
- **Elizabeth Felix (Idaho Department of Lands)** – Elizabeth is the Lands Program Manager for IDL. She will be IDL’s new representative on the SAC. Elizabeth said that the Land Board approved development of CCAs on IDL land. They need to meet with Joe and OSC to see what they can do for IDL lands. Elizabeth mentioned that during a recent sage-grouse summit (ICA?) there was a suggestion made that IDL develop CCAs on block ownership lands. She said IDL was interested in where this suggestion came from and what the thinking behind it was. She wanted to know why folks aren’t going for a programmatic CCAA on large areas. **[Action: Tom Hemker will follow-up with the Elizabeth to try to clarify which meeting she was referring to.]**
- **Donna Bennett (Owyhee LWG)** – Donna reported that Owyhee County met August 20th. The group is working on their Juniper mastication project. Rocky Mtn. Elk Foundation wanted to work on it but they were also interested in working on quaking aspen as part of the project. That’s been problematic. The group is looking at spring cheatgrass control on the Air Force bombing range. They plan to fly herbicides over the area using big tankers. The group is also going back and revisiting past projects. They had a representative from OSC come and talk to them about wanting to start a SWMA for eastern Owyhee County. The group is currently looking at taking bids for the juniper mastication project. Their next meeting is November 12, 2008.
- **Rich Yankee (Shoshone Basin LWG)** – Rich reported that within the last two weeks about 6,000 acres burned near Rogerson. Of that, about 4,000 was private lands and most of the remainder was

BLM land. However, he said the surrounding habitat is in good to excellent condition to the impact to sage-grouse may be mitigated somewhat. Earlier this summer they had a fire down by the Nevada line. That fire burned all of one pasture. They had a good working group meeting in August. They held a tour in September and visited past projects including the Dixie Herald project. The LWG determined that the project had met their objectives of allowing re-growth of sagebrush and forbs. They will be looking at doing some similar projects in the future.

Rich said that for years the group has been known as one of the earliest working groups, and in the last year or so, Rich said he's been embarrassed that they hadn't completed their LWG plan. He was very happy to report that the group had finished their plan. He also wanted to particularly thank one individual who helped facilitate their group from the beginning and was instrumental in getting the plan done -- that is Elena Shaw with the BLM. He said the group is going to need at least some administrative help to keep the group going forward with meeting announcements, etc. They are looking at having an informational meeting in January to expand their efforts to work more intensively with landowners and permittees.

- **Jack Depperschmidt (Department of Energy)** – Jack said that the DOE is a cooperating agency on the MSTI EIS. The DOE is currently going through the process of trying to develop a formal policy for approval of rights of way on their site. They've had discussions about whether to approve extensive rights of way through their site but they haven't come to any resolution yet.

In terms of their own sage-grouse monitoring efforts, they've captured 12 males, 25 females, and had 5 mortalities. They found 20 nests and indication of about 30% apparent nest success. About 45% of females were yearlings; they had a male that took off and went to the continental divide on the border of Idaho and Montana, and a female nested between Lone Pine and Leadore. Of the 18 hens that were monitored, 15 nested on site (83%), 3 nested off site (17%). Sixty % of the hens nested within 5 km of their capture location. Twenty-five % of the hens nested from 5-8 km of their capture location. Fifteen % of the hens nested from 10 – 33 km of their capture location. Overall average distance to next from capture for this sample is 6.2 km. They're currently seeing the birds start to move again. They have another year of work planned and funded. Last year was difficult because of snow depth and trying to get to the various locations was tough.

Jack noted that there was a Post Register article about INL and their sage-grouse project misrepresented the amount that DOE was spending on the study and said that they were spending 4 million on sage-grouse. In fact, they are spending 4 million for the entire conservation project – but not all of that is for sage-grouse; the sage-grouse portion was \$300,000 last year and about the same this year.

- **Frank Fink (USDA-NRCS)** – Frank reported that the 2009 fiscal year has begun. They are still waiting for the new rules on the Farm Bill. He has no idea how much funds they will be getting. He said he

expected that they would hear about their budget after the election -- or before the snow melts. They are working on development of a cost share list right now. This list will be reviewed by the state technical committee, which meets next on October 15. Frank noted that any SAC members who are members of the technical committee should make sure they show up to the meeting if at all possible.

- **Natalie Turley (Idaho Power)** – Natalie noted that Gateway West is a cooperative project between Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power. She said she'd be happy to try to answer any questions when the group got to the discussion of infrastructure projects.
- **Mark Collinge (APHIS Wildlife Services)** – Mark said that he had heard from representatives from several LWGs that were interested in doing a raven predation research project (Pete Coates project). He said that his agency is available to help those groups that want to do some type of proposal. He noted that Pete Coates is now with U.S. Geological Survey in CA.
- **John Romero (Idaho Cattle Association)** – John said that ICA has been very busy although they have been going through some administrative turmoil in last few months. John said he has been involved in several issues related to the SAC.

ICA has been very involved with several of the agencies and the OSC in discussions about development of a statewide CCAA. He said that ICA doesn't have their heels dug in but that they want to make sure that we're able to get something done to protect landowners and to be able to protect grazing on state and federal lands.

John said he's also continued to be involved in the Cooperative Sagebrush Initiative (CSI). Tom Hemker and John Romero were both at the CSI annual meeting. The group has just been through a RFP for projects. Idaho Fish and Game submitted a project and that project made the first round cut. John said that CSI received a million dollars in NRCS funds. He noted the importance of the SAC being involved with that as potential funding source.

John commented that the State of Idaho doesn't provide any funding for the SAC. Utah, on the other hand, provides two million dollars for sage-grouse conservation. ICA has had preliminary discussions with legislators recently. There is one legislator who is willing to carry a resolution forward for state funding for SAC projects. John just wrote a resolution saying that ICA will seek state sage-grouse funding for sage-grouse projects and development of a CCAA; the idea is that funding would come from the state general fund. That legislation would have to be broad based legislation. Tom Hemker and John Romero have had some discussion about this.

John commented that with the change in Directors of OSC and IDFG it wasn't clear that the SAC is as familiar an entity as it was with the previous directors. SAC representation at other meetings would

be a very good thing to have. He commented that he would like to talk about development of a SAC Executive Committee at some point.

- **John Robison (Idaho Conservation League)** – John said he was at the meeting filling in for Rich Howard. He said he hoped mostly to listen. He noted that he was encouraged to see that discussion of the infrastructure issues was on the agenda.
- **Steve Goddard (Idaho Wildlife Federation; Ada County Fish and Game League)** – Steve said that since the last meeting and since the beginning of the listing review process he has been very interested to hear about where Idaho fits into the overall review process in terms of significant portion of the range. Steve commented that it seemed to him that if Idaho has an effective plan and that is working, Idaho should be exempt from strictures of the ESA.
- **Mark Orme (Caribou-Targhee NF)** – Mark said that he was attending the meeting on behalf of Robb Mickelsen. He noted what they're doing a project on the Curlew National Grassland including firebreaks, seeding forage kochia and that seeding will occur this winter. In west Strong Field, this fall, they will be planting sage-grouse seedlings. They will also be doing seeding with forb seeds. The area was burned a couple years ago.
- **Lynn Burtenshaw (Upper Snake LWG)** – Lynn said that the Upper Snake wanted to have hunting Zone 8 (that goes up to Bighorn Creek drainage) be cut off from the Big Desert LWG planning area. He said that they're having a hard time tracking that area and that the group really wants to see that changed.

Their LWG also discussed the Raven predation research studies and it looks like there's lots of interest.

He said the Upper Snake is also very concerned about the transmission lines; they don't know how many other groups are commenting on the transmission lines. He noted that the LWGs are a bunch of separate groups and that while we know how different issues affect our groups there is concern about whether or not its appropriate for a LWG to comment on something that might affect another group. He also noted that they've been looking at mitigation ideas and that they roughed some ideas out. He said that in developing some draft mitigation ideas they decided to shoot high. The proposed MSTI lines could end up going right through the area where they recently buried the powerline. Lynn suggested that the SAC should send in a comment from the whole group.

He also noted that he shared John Romero's concerns about funding, and said that we're scrambling every year to do projects with hardly any funding. He proposed that mitigation funding be established that is scaled to the potential impact of a project. The funding would go to OSC and be dedicated for sage-grouse conservation project; that might dovetail with legislation that the State come up with additional general fund funding. He commented that the only way for something like

that to pass is if a group as diverse as the SAC gets together and pushes for it. **[Action: Tom Hemker will follow-up with the LWG facilitator regarding the hunting Zone request.]**

- **John Peavey (North Magic Valley LWG)** – John noted that there were two people at the meeting who could also fill in information about the North Magic Valley (Doug Howard and Julie Randell). John said their group has been working through the state plan. He reported that the group listens well and communicates well and that overall there is a good feeling among the LWG members. Right now the group is working on annual grasslands and livestock grazing. Doug Howard also reported that an important issue for the North Magic Valley LWG is that Blaine County wants to move the airport from Hailey to prime sage-grouse habitat.
- **Julie Randell (South Magic LWG)** – Julie reported that the South Magic Valley LWG has just started and that she will be the SAC representative for the group.

Progress Update: SAC Technical Advisory Team (TAT)

Ann Moser, the Chair of the SAC TAT, provided an update on SAC TAT activities. She commented that she hasn't gotten much feedback from the SAC TAT members on the various materials that she has sent out for review. Alison suggested that the group reconfirm the individuals who were willing to participate actively in SAC TAT reviews and other activities as needed. Those individuals included: Ann Moser, Paul Makela, Robb Mickelsen, Kendra Womack (limited participation as needed), Elizabeth Felix, Natalie Turley, Frank Fink, Jack Depperschmidt, Alan Sands, Ron Kay, and Steve Goddard, Office of Species Conservation also said they can provide some technical support as needed.

Ann reported that the next SAC newsletter would be completed after the SAC meeting per previous discussion about the value of incorporating LWG updates provided at the SAC meetings. Ann said that she is always looking for suggestions for articles/information to include in the newsletter. Wendy Pratt has offered to write an article for the coming newsletter.

Ann reported that she'd sent recommendations for improvements to the IDFG website sage-grouse page to the IDFG web masters. She hoped that some of the proposed changes might be completed as early as next week.

The SAC TAT has not had a chance to work on updates to the solicitation process per discussion at the July SAC meeting, but will do so prior to the January SAC meeting.

IDFG and BLM have been working on updating the key habitats map to include nesting, late brood rearing, and breeding season information. Ann noted that while local people in some areas know a great deal about conditions on the ground, that information hasn't been translated onto the maps that are available, and in some areas there are substantial gaps in information.

Ann handed out a summary of sage-grouse wing collections (September 19, 2008), which showed the following:

Comparison of sex and age ratios between sage-grouse wings collected from birds harvested in September vs. October, 1991–2007.

	September	October
Adult female	10,990 (32%)	934 (32%)
Adult male	5,682 (16%)	501 (17%)
Juvenile female	9,994 (29%)	797 (28%)
Juvenile male	7,920 (23%)	652 (23%)
Total wings	34,586	2,884

Comparison of sex and age ratios between sage-grouse wings collected from birds harvested the first 7 days of the season vs the remainder of the season, 2006–2007.

	First 7 days	Remainder of season
Adult female	82 (35%)	33 (34%)
Adult male	36 (16%)	13 (13%)
Juvenile female	75 (32%)	31 (32%)
Juvenile male	39 (17%)	20 (21%)
Total wings	232	97

Ann also provided a summary of the progress to date in completing the implementation milestones identified in Chapter 6 of the state plan (note: this was a follow-up action from the April SAC meeting in Dubois). That summary is attached to these notes (Attachment A).

Sage-grouse Project 2008 Funding Status Update

Tom Hemker presented an update on the status of 2008 project funding (see Attachment B). Tom noted that it was difficult to know whether there would be any funding available in 2009 or not. He said that OSC put in two funding requests for 2009 – one for \$1 million for wolves, and one for \$1 million for sage-grouse.

Wendy Pratt commented that the group should also be thinking about things like grazing management changes that don't necessarily cost anything but that can have a big impact to sage-grouse habitat.

Frank Fink talked about the importance of engaging with the NRCS funding process, and particularly of private landowners engaging. He commented that it would be important for folks to come to the October 15th NRCS Technical meeting if possible. The group also talked a little about the possibility of requesting NRCS funding for the SAC. Participants also discussed the use of NRCS funding for non-federal match. Tom Perry from OSC indicated that he did not think NRCS funds could be used as non-federal match. **[Action: Tom Perry will look into use of NRCS funds as non-federal match and let Tom Hemker know if this is possible or not.]**

Update: Coordination of Fence Deterrent Research

Tom reported that he is still working on coordinating with Jack Connelly and others on this he will report back at the next SAC meeting.

Presentation: Cheatgrass

Mike Pellant who works for the BLM gave a presentation on cheatgrass control strategies. Mike started his presentation by explaining that the BLM's restoration strategy has two main focuses:

- Protect or manage plant communities that are currently functioning well and are meeting resource objectives (e.g., sagebrush communities);
- Restore selected weed infested plant communities to a diversity of plants (preferably natives) that meet land use plan objectives, reduce fire hazard and limit the expansion of weeds.

He said that cheatgrass and medusahead wildrye are estimated to make up a major part of plant communities on 25 million acres (1/3 of the total public land acreage) in the Great Basin. Cheatgrass and medusahead and the resulting wildfire problems are generally associated with the lower elevation, arid salt desert shrub and Wyoming big sagebrush communities.

Mike talked about the cheatgrass wildfire cycle and noted that it is essential to immediately begin to proactively address the issue of restoring properly functioning plant communities. He said that wildfires are going to continue to be a common event and will likely increase in size and frequency; that areas dominated by cheatgrass will continue to increase; that wildlife habitat will continue to be lost; firefighters lives will continue to be at risk as wildfire behavior becomes more erratic. He also noted that a big concern is that new more aggressive and less desirable invasive plants will enter and eventually crowd out cheatgrass in disturbed plant communities.

Mike turned next to a discussion of the level and scale of restoration required. He talked about and gave examples of a number of different cheatgrass control strategies including a brief overview of the pros and cons of a variety of seeding approaches (e.g., green strips and restoration work) and non-seeding options (e.g., biological control, mechanical control, prescribed fire and herbicides).

Mike also identified some resources that participants might be interested in looking at:

- Revegetation equipment catalog - <http://Reveg-catalog.tamu.edu>
- SageStep Treatment Evaluation Project - <http://www.sagestep.org>

Finally, Mike talked a bit about climate change in relation to cheatgrass and other invasive species:

- Climate change models predict temperature changes ranging from 3.6-9 degrees F in the future (Chambers et al. 2007).

- Warming temperatures may shift the current distribution of invasive species to new environments in the Great Basin.
- Cheatgrass has appeared in lower elevation Ponderosa pine forests causing manager concerns that wildfires may increase in these ecosystems.
- One model predicts that much of the sagebrush in the southern Great Basin could eventually be replaced by Mojave Desert shrubs to the south due to projected higher temperatures and less frost in this portion of the Great Basin (Neilson et al. 2005).
- Loss of sagebrush will have significant impacts on wildlife species especially sage-grouse and other sagebrush obligate species, which are dependent on this shrub-dominated ecosystem for food and shelter (Knick 1999).
- Cheatgrass is expected to respond even more favorably than most native plants to conditions with increased atmospheric CO₂ (Smith et al. 2000).
- One recent study hypothesized that the increase in rangeland wildfires is partially due to enhanced cheatgrass production stimulated by increasing CO₂ levels (Ziska et al. 2005). This study also found that cheatgrass will become more coarse (e.g., lignin content will increase) in the future which will reduce the time that it is palatable to livestock and wildlife and thereby result in the greater accumulation of fuel loads. The ability to use livestock to reduce cheatgrass continuity and fuel loads may also be reduced.

If you would like a copy of Mike's presentation contact Alison (alison@softridge.net). If you have questions you can contact Mike at: michael_pellant@blm.gov.

Presentation: Fire Season Update

Paul Makela was unable to attend the meeting so Tom Rinkes gave Paul's presentation on the recent fire season on Paul's behalf.

Tom R. noted that the threats matrix from the 2006 Idaho Sage-grouse Plan ranked Wildfire as the number one threat statewide due to the rapidity and scale with which fire can adversely affect sage-grouse habitat. He showed a map of the cumulative wildfires from 1990-2003 and explained that much of the Big Desert, North Magic Valley and Jarbidge areas have burned at least once in that time frame.

As of September 23, 2008, 131,715 acres has burned statewide, based on available BLM fire data. About 44% of the burned area is within Key sage-grouse habitat or potential restoration areas (57,293 acres in Key R1, R2 or R3 habitat; 74,421 acres in non habitat/unclassified).

In general, Tom said, 2008 proved to be a relatively slow fire year in comparison with 2007. A generally cool, dry spring led to later vegetation growth and less fine fuels than in the past couple of years. That, coupled with significantly less lightning and fewer days with multiple fires, resulted in less acres burned.

A comparison with 2007 and historical data shows that the 2008 fire season, based on BLM data to date, resulted in only a fraction of acres burned in 2007 and far less than the 10 year average.

To date, he said, six BLM fires have led to Emergency Fire Stabilization/ Burned Area Rehabilitation Plans in development. For 2008 BLM fire rehabilitation plans (contingent on funding) include:

Fire	Ground Seeding Acres (e.g., drill)	Aerial Seeding Acres (e.g., sagebrush)	Seedlings to be planted (e.g., bitterbrush, sagebrush)
N. Minidoka	11,750	27,800	N/A
Nature	7,872	N/A	10,000
Sand Shed	2,500	N/A	N/A
Beacon	440	N/A	N/A
East Slide	60	800	N/A
Knudsen	N/A	N/A	Weed treatments only
Shoshone Basin	N/A	2,700	N/A

To date Murphy Complex rehabilitation (as of September 29, 2008) has included:

Treatment	Acres BLM Lands	Acres IDL Lands
Drill Seeding-Mixed	63,649	6,400
Drill seeding – Bitterbrush	18,755	
Aerial Seeding – Grass	13,549	640
Aerial Seeding - Sagebrush	258,686	21,223

Presentation: Illustrated Landowner Guide

Jeff Gillan, a graduate student at the University of Idaho working for the Dept of Rangeland Ecology and Management, gave a brief presentation on the Illustrated Landowner Guide that he is working on in coordination with Joe Hinson and several professionals from the BLM and IDFG. He explained that the guidebook is in the development stage and that he was looking for input and comments from the SAC and others.

Jeff said the guidebook is intended to give readers a basic introduction and understanding of the sage-grouse issues in Idaho. The guidebook will primarily consist of color photos of the different habitats the birds use during each season of the year. Because habitat in one part of Idaho may look much different than habitat in another part, the guide will have photos of each of the different vegetative groups and habitat looks throughout its range in Idaho. A brief overview of sage-grouse describing the reasons for the decline in population and associated conservation efforts will also be included.

Jeff said he also wants to include a short section talking about how the sage-grouse issue could affect landowners or citizens of Idaho.

He explained that he sees the target audience primarily being landowners, but entry-level agency staff could also use it as a reference, as well as anyone else who wants to get a basic introduction to sage-grouse in Idaho. His vision is that landowners would be able to get information they need know about

sage-grouse to help them be better stewards. He emphasized that it will not be a prescriptive guide. The intention is to help people identify habitat, not tell them how to manage it.

He turned next to an overview of the contents of the book explaining that it will start with a basic description of what the bird looks like, how to identify it, and how to recognize signs that the bird is living in an area - such as tracks and scat. The guidebook will take the reader through the life cycle of sage-grouse starting in the Spring and describe what they do during each season, what the habitat requirements are, and what the habitat might look like. The idea is to have lots of photos with limited text. Jeff showed examples of the types of photos that would be included in the guidebook and explained that he will be taking photos over the next year throughout the different habitat types around the state and in different seasons.

Jeff asked the SAC members to contact him with suggestions for the guidebook or questions about the project. His contact information follows:

Jeff Gillan, University of Idaho
jkentg@hotmail.com
(530) 339-5975

Update: USFWS Status Review

Kendra Womack with USFWS gave an update on the 2008 Greater Sage-Grouse Status Review. She began by reminding everyone what is involved in a status review:

- 5 Factor Threats Analysis
- Policy for Evaluating Conservation Efforts (PECE) Analysis
- Significant Portion of the Range/Distinct Population Segments
- Extinction Risk
- Reasonably Foreseeable Future
 - For sage-grouse, last decision used 30-100 years

She explained that the 5 Factor Threats Analysis includes:

- Factor A – Habitat
- Factor B – Overuse
- Factor C – Disease or predation
- Factor D – Inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms
- Factor E – Other natural or manmade factors

She reviewed the possible outcomes of a status review, which are:

- Listing is warranted (associated proposed rule to list the species as threatened or endangered is usually issued at this time)
- Listing is not warranted (process ends); or

- Listing is warranted but precluded by other higher priority listing actions (under this scenario the species becomes a candidate for listing under the ESA).

Kendra turned next to a summary of progress in the status review. She explained that in September 2008 the USFWS held a recommendation workshop in Denver, CO. That workshop included USFWS biologists and regional managers. At the workshop they reviewed and discussed major population and habitat changes since last status review, conservation efforts to address those impacts, and major impacts likely to occur in the near future (i.e., what's on the horizon for sage grouse). They also looked at the recently completed WAFWA rangewide trend analysis.

In reviewing changes since the last status review some of the areas where they have seen some fairly large changes include:

- Increase in fire, invasive species, energy development/infrastructure
- West Nile Virus impacts
- Climate change

Kendra also provided an update on the court actions. She reported that a declaration was filed with the Judge in August and the Plaintiff responded in September. At this point there's been no response from the Judge. Pacific Legal Fund appealed the 2007 decision. The outcome of the 2008 status review is still anticipated in December 2008.

Presentation: Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances (CCAA)

Joe Hinson, who is working with the Office of Species Conservation and the West Central LWG, gave an update on the status of the West Central CCAA and potential implications for development of other CCAAs in Idaho. Tom Perry with the Office of Species Conservation also talked a little about discussions that have been ongoing about the potential for developing a statewide CCAA.

Joe explained that a little over two years ago, he and others started working on development a programmatic CCAA for the West Central sage-grouse planning area in Idaho. He said he thought they were pretty close to a finished agreement.

Joe provided some background context for the West Central's CCAA effort:

- There are about 1 million acres in SW Idaho, including a mix of private, state and BLM lands
- For the West Central LWG planning area there is good scientific data available including vegetative types, shrub cover, and four years of telemetry data
- Major land use is ranching; major threat is "ranchettes"
- The West Central is developing a programmatic CCAA, in which the agencies have been involved from the start
- It ties to the state plan, and represents the implementation of the state plan within the West Central planning area

- It provides a possible template for similar efforts elsewhere

Joe explained that the West Central restated the threats identified in the state plan in terms of the West Central situation and also noted how the threat would likely manifest itself. The CCAA also attempts to identify different aspects of each threat, which would have to be addressed at a different level (e.g., different responsible parties and different actions). Joe commented that a challenge has been identifying a standard by which to judge sage-grouse habitat across the landscape. He explained that the state plan generally adopts the Connelly guidelines and that those are consistent with BLM's "rangeland health standards," so those became the West Central standard too, even on private lands.

He outlined the process they are developing for enrolling landowners, which consists of:

- Initial visit by agency staffs or consultants
- Discussions with landowner
- Preparation of maps and data
- Analyzing threats, develop conservation actions
- Establishing monitoring points and protocols
- Drafting, reviewing, revising
- Within one year, full field analysis
- Annual meetings, with full monitoring every 5 years

He also talked about the process that has been the most challenging so far, and has taken the most time in the development of the West Central CCAA. That is building the tie with public land management:

- CCAAs are well-established for private lands, but have no ability to affect federal lands
- Federal lands are making changes to achieve sage-grouse standards, but relatively slowly
- "Conferencing" can decide if federal management is sufficient for Sec. 7
- CCAA conservation measures must meet a standard that is higher than Sec. 7 "no jeopardy". Conservation measures to meet this standard will be used on enrolled state, private lands within federal ownerships
- Question is what level to conference upon (allotment, working group area, RMP) and will decisions coming from that conference require NEPA

Key remaining questions and tasks include:

- Some re-writing and reorganizing of the CCAA e.g., clarifying amount of science that belongs in the document versus appendices; developing a closer tie between the threats, conservation actions, and expected benefits
- Identifying the permit holder, parties to the agreement and their responsibilities (Fish and Game, OSC, Soil Conservation Districts are possible permit holders, with overall responsibility for implementation of the agreement)
- The parties and their responsibilities under the agreement include:

- Fish and Game—Permit holder with MOUs with other parties for some implementation responsibilities
- OSC—Seeker of funds for implementation, monitoring
- BLM—Cooperate in grazing practices when pastures are public/private and conservation actions include grazing modifications
- Local Government—Fire control plans, planning and zoning, mosquito abatement
- Soil Conservation Districts—Provide technical support, funding through Farm Bill programs
- Refining site-specific agreements and the enrollment process
 - Process must be landowner-friendly and efficient
 - It must reflect the realistic capacities of the agencies
 - Should be expansive, to include SCDs, local Fish and Game staff, consultants
 - Great potential for a process that is web-based with landowner completion of the basic data
 - Should tie closely to requirements for various Farm Bill programs (EQIP funds, Conservation Security Program, others)

Joe presented the following possible future actions as they relate to the rest of the state:

- BLM and USFWS will suggest a process for agreeing to adequate conservation measures ahead of the ESA listing. This process will focus on the kinds of conservation measures and the appropriate level and/or vehicles for conferencing and NEPA analysis.
- Complete the West Central CCAA as a potential model for subsequent agreements in other areas of the state.
- IDFG will work with the local working groups to complete additional data collection, analysis and mapping.

Participants also talked a little about the possibility of developing a statewide CCAA. At this time, Tom Perry said it looked like that was not a viable option. For now, OSC is focused on completing the West Central CCAA and then looking at potential applicability of that model in other targeted areas of the state.

Discussion: Power Infrastructure Projects and Potential Effects on Sage-grouse Habitat

The group turned next to a discussion of three major power infrastructure projects including:

- **Gateway West Transmission project.** Idaho Power and Rocky Mountain Power are planning to build a high voltage transmission line across southern Wyoming and southern Idaho. Known as Gateway West, line segments are scheduled for completion in 2014. The project will reach across southern Wyoming and southern Idaho, with approximately 1,000 miles of high voltage transmission lines. Nearly 450 miles will be located in Idaho and approximately 550 miles

located in Wyoming. The transmission lines will consist of either 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines, 230 kV transmission lines, or a combination of the two types of line. For more information see:

- www.wy.blm.gov/nepa/cfodocs/gateway_west
- www.idahopower.com/newsroom/projnews/Gateway/
- www.rockymountainpower.net/transmission

- **Mountain States Transmission Intertie transmission line (MSTI).** NorthWestern Energy proposes to construct, operate and maintain the Mountain States Transmission Intertie (MSTI) 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line to address the requests for transmission service from customers and to relieve constraints on the high-voltage transmission system in the region. The new transmission line would begin at the new Townsend Substation, which would be constructed in southwestern Montana about five miles south of the town of Townsend. The line would proceed south into southeastern Idaho connecting to Idaho Power Company's (IPCO) existing Midpoint Substation, 10 miles north of Jerome, Idaho. For more information see:

- <http://www.msti500kv.com/>
- http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/prog/lands_realty/projects.html

- **China Mountain Windpower Project.** China Mountain Wind, LLC proposes to develop an approximately 425 megawatt (MW) wind energy facility consisting of up to 185 wind turbines on approximately 30,700 acres in the Jarbidge Foothills. Each wind turbine would have a capacity between 2.3 and 3.0 MW. The project would be located southwest of the town of Rogerson in Twin Falls County, Idaho and west of the town of Jackpot in Elko County, Nevada. The proposed project area includes: approximately 15,300 acres of public land administered by the BLM Twin Falls District, Jarbidge Field Office; 4,700 acres of public lands administered by BLM Elko District, Wells Field Office; 2,000 acres of land managed by the State of Idaho; and 8,700 acres of private land in Idaho.

- http://www.blm.gov/id/st/en/prog/planning/china_mountain_wind.html

Participants identified three questions they wanted to address related to infrastructure issues:

- 1) Is it appropriate for LWGs to comment on infrastructure activities that are occurring outside of their LWG planning area?
- 2) Should the SAC (do members wish to) comment as a group on infrastructure projects?
- 3) Does the SAC wish to send a letter on the MSTI project in time to meet the October 10, 2008, EIS scoping deadline?

Summary of discussion:

- SAC members agreed that LWGs should make their own decisions regarding submitting comments on infrastructure activities within their planning area.
- SAC members also thought it was appropriate for LWGs to comment on activities outside of their planning area that might have impacts within their planning area, but that they should acknowledge what the boundaries of their planning area are and ask the facilitators to help communicate and coordinate with other LWGs if possible prior to submitting comments.
- SAC member thought that an appropriate role for the SAC to play was to comment (when possible and when there is the possibility of developing agreement) on landscape scale issues, or infrastructure projects that might impact more than one LWG (e.g., MSTI project).
- Some participants also felt the SAC might wish to comment on issues that occur in one LWG if the LWG wished that the SAC would do so.
- Participants talked about the challenges of meeting comment deadlines and staying aware of new infrastructure projects when the SAC meets only quarterly.
- Some individuals raised the suggestion of the need for an Executive Committee that could attend various important meetings, respond in a timely fashion to critical deadlines, and represent the SAC in a variety of settings.
- Participants agreed to defer the discussion of an Executive Committee for later in the agenda and/or future agendas.
- Participants also talked about the need to track other large infrastructure projects and asked that the SAC TAT consider making that part of their role. Specifically to start with, members asked for additional information on the Sunstone Natural Gas Pipeline.

Agreements

- SAC members agreed to send a letter on behalf of the SAC on the MSTI project that included the following points:
 1. Sage-grouse populations and habitat should be considered in the scoping process.
 2. The infrastructure threat discussion and conservation actions from the state plan should be considered in the scoping and in the development of alternatives (a web link to the state plan is to be included in the letter, and a CD of the plan should be included too).
 3. Additional alternatives should be considered that avoid impacts to sage-grouse.
 4. Where possible routes should be matched with other developed areas e.g., roads.
 5. A hyperlink to the state Sage-grouse Conservation Plan should be included in the letter and a CD with a copy of the plan should also be included with the letter

6. The letter should be signed on behalf of the SAC by the facilitator and should list all of the SAC members by organization not individuals name (e.g., name of each of the LWGs, ICL, ICA, etc.)
 7. The letter should include a paragraph describing the SAC and its role.
- Members also asked Alison to draft a similar letter on the China Mountain Wind Power Project and the Gateway West and send those out to SAC for review/comment along with meeting summary notes.

Discussion: Mitigation/Conservation Subcommittee Update

The group turned next to an update from the mitigation/conservation subcommittee Chair, Lynn Burtenshaw. Lynn distributed a draft document summarizing a proposed approach to mitigation for energy transmission lines. The content of that draft proposal follows:

Discussion Draft -- Draft Proposal State of Idaho Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan	
Habitat Category	Mitigation Options
Key Habitat: i.e., nesting, brood rearing, Summer, Winter and non fragmented or slightly fragmented habitat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use single pole, pointed to pedestal style towers where possible. Pay \$100,000 per mile for first year to OSC funds dedicated to sage-grouse habitat improvement projects. Then negotiated payments for the life of the project, renegotiated every 10 years. Also reimburse annually, collateral income losses to other habitat users. 2. Bury line. Pay \$50,000 per mile and pay negotiated mitigation sum per year, for the life of the project for weed control, monitoring and habitat improvement. 3. Move route to nonessential habitat
Fragmented key habitat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use single pole, pointed to pedestal style towers where possible. Pay \$200,000 per mile for first year to OSC funds dedicated to sage-grouse habitat improvement projects. Then negotiated payments for the life of the project, renegotiated every 10 years. Also reimburse annually, collateral income losses to other habitat users. 2. Bury line. Pay \$50,000 per mile and pay negotiated mitigation sum per year, for the life of the project for weed control, monitoring and habitat improvement. 3. Move route to nonessential habitat.
Fragmented habitat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use single pole, pointed to pedestal style towers where possible. Pay \$50,000 per mile for first year to OSC funds dedicated to sage-grouse habitat improvement projects. Then negotiated payments for the life of the project, renegotiated every 10 years. Also reimburse annually, collateral income losses to other habitat users. 2. Bury line. Pay \$10,000 per mile and pay negotiated mitigation sum per year, for the life of the project for weed control, monitoring and habitat improvement. 3. Move route to nonessential habitat.
Existing utility corridor through key habitat or transportation corridor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay \$20,000 per mile for first year to OSC funds dedicated to sage-grouse habitat improvement projects. Then negotiated payments for the life of projects, renegotiated every 10 years. Also reimburse annually, collateral income losses to other habitat users. 2. Bury line. Pay \$5,000 per mile and pay negotiated mitigation sum per year, for the life of the project for weed control, monitoring and habitat improvement. 3. Move route to nonessential habitat.
Non-essential habitat: private, municipal or other ownership etc. not	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay \$5,000 per mile for first year to OSC, funds dedicated to sage-grouse habitat improvement projects. Then negotiated payments for the life expectancy of the project, renegotiated every 10 years.

Discussion Draft -- Draft Proposal State of Idaho Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan	
Habitat Category	Mitigation Options
providing significant sage-grouse habitat	

Summary of discussion following Lynn's presentation:

- Participants thanked Lynn for the time and thought that he had put into the proposal. Lynn complemented some of the other individuals who had provided input.
- Some people asked which department in the State would enforce a mitigation/conservation program? The group thought probably it would be the Governor's Energy Office. Some wondered if that office would be willing to support a mitigation/conservation program.
- A number of individuals commented on the value of, and the need to, develop partners who would be interested in working together to put forward a conservation/mitigation program e.g., the mule deer initiative.
- One participant noted that the BLM did a programmatic NEPA (still in draft) to identify a strategic energy corridor (West-wide Energy Corridor Programmatic EIS - <http://corridoreis.anl.gov/>). But the proposed infrastructure projects are not following the identified strategic corridors. Mitigation proposal might help encourage use of corridors. Moving route to area designated by BLM should be the first option.
- Another suggestion was that BLM permit fees for infrastructure should include a set aside for mitigation, agreed in an MOU with OSC or another entity.
- The example was given of Owyhee County hazardous waste site permits – where a portion of the permit money goes to the emergency services fund.
- Some participants commented that they aren't sure we can afford having these energy corridors period – because we can't afford to lose more habitat.
- One participant noted that reliability issues are one of the reasons that putting all of the power lines along existing corridors isn't an attractive option. There is concern that a fire or other natural or unnatural disaster could take all of the infrastructure out at once if everything is concentrated in one corridor.

Agreements

- Participants agree to put further discussion of mitigation/conservation on the January SAC agenda.
- A group of individuals volunteered (or were volunteered in their absence) to form a subcommittee to continue to review and comment on the draft mitigation document that Lynn presented. Those individuals are:
 - Paul Makela

- John Romero
- John Robison
- Ken Crane
- Lynn Burtenshaw

Discussion: Chapter 6 – Implementation Task Force

The group engaged in a discussion about the approach to updating and fleshing out Chapter 6. At the April 2008 meeting in Dubois, the SAC agreed to begin work on Chapter 6 after the USFWS reached a decision in December. At the October meeting participants discussed the approach to completing Chapter 6 and agreed to develop an “Implementation Task Force.” Following is a summary of discussion regarding the Implementation Task Force:

- Purpose of Task Force would be to develop Chapter 6 so that it includes specific implementation actions for each of the threats in the state plan.
- Group would function in a similar fashion to the subcommittee that developed the state plan i.e., would include a representative group drawn from the larger SAC (approx 10-15 people), would meet over a concentrated period of time to develop a draft of Chapter 6 that would then be taken to the full SAC for review.
- One of the early tasks would be to development of maps (SAC TAT and others will be able to help with this).
- Task Force would meet approximately 1.75 days (back-to-back meetings) monthly for 4 to 6 months to complete a draft of Chapter 6.
- A number of individuals commented that its time to do it. Some noted that the timing is good because other states are looking at this too. They felt there was potential to see what other states are doing and try to integrate other ideas where possible.
- Participants suggested that the Implementation Task Force meetings should be facilitated.
- The group discussed where the meetings would occur, and suggested that meetings be split between Boise, Twin Falls and possibly other locations.
- Participants talked about the difficulty of committing enough time and some members commented that the work should occur before the early spring when many SAC members are in the field or working on their ranches.
- Alison asked which SAC members would be interested in participating in the Implementation Task Force and willing to commit the necessary time. Tom will work to help identify and recruit a balanced group of participants. The following individuals expressed interest:
 - Sam Chandler (willing)

- Steve Goddard (willing)
- Mike Remming (willing)
- Ron Kay said that someone from Idaho State Dept. of Ag would participate
- Robb Mikelsen (was volunteered in his absence)
- Paul Makela was (volunteered in his absence)
- The BLM will commit to providing GIS support for the effort
- Kendra Womack (will participate on a limited basis)
- John Romero (maybe)
- Dave Ellis (maybe)
- Rochelle Oxarango (maybe)
- Lynn Burtenshaw (maybe)
- Rich Howard and/or John Robison (will discuss)
- John Peavey (maybe)
- Arthur Dick (willing)

Next Steps:

- Tom Hemker will write up a draft work plan (i.e., major milestones and deliverables) for the Task Force and distribute that to the SAC in early November.
- Tom will look into scheduling meetings, identifying the Task Force members, and securing a facilitator (some participants suggested they would like to have Alison facilitate the group since she had experience with development of the state plan).

Next Steps

- SAC participants requested that Tom send out an updated list of SAC participants and contact information. Alison asked SAC members to review the list and provide any corrections.
- Tom and Alison will work with David Smith to make sure that individuals who don't have access to email are receiving materials by email in a timely fashion (e.g., Dave Ellis, John Peavey do not have email access).
- Kendra Womack will follow-up with research citations mentioned during the meeting.

Next Meeting:

- The next SAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 13 and 14, 2009.
- Tentative agenda topics include:
 - Discuss Chapter 6
 - Discuss conservation/mitigation proposal

- Follow-up report from Tom Hemker on changes to hunting zone borders and relationships to LWG boundaries.
- Follow-up on funding for telemetry project in East Idaho Uplands (Tom Hemker)
- Fence deterrent research update (Tom Hemker)
- Changes to funding solicitation process and materials
- Discussion of USFWS decision and related issues

Adjourn

Tom Hemker thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting.

Attachment A. Chapter 6 Progress Update

Chapter 6 Progress to Date, October 2008.

Chapter 6 provided Implementation Milestones for Local Working Groups, conservation measures, and sage-grouse population and habitat monitoring.

- Local Working Groups: 3 of 5 tasks have been completed.
- Conservation measures, only 3 threats (wildfire, annual grasslands, and sport hunting) were addressed in Chapter 6. The remaining 16 have no identified milestones.
 - Wildfire: BLM has addressed all 6 tasks.
 - Annual grasslands: BLM has addressed 1 of 2 tasks.
 - Sport hunting: IDFG has completed the 2 tasks.
- Sage-grouse population monitoring: 1 of 3 tasks has been completed.
- Sage-grouse habitat monitoring: 7 of 9 tasks have been completed.

6 Implementation Milestones

The successful implementation of this Plan necessitates that certain important tasks and processes occur in a timely manner. Many sound, proactive activities, such as sage-grouse habitat restoration, wildfire suppression and rehabilitation, restrictive sage-grouse harvests, and control of invasive plant species are already in progress or will be planned on a site-specific basis. Many other important tasks are pending. The purpose of this Chapter is to concisely summarize the latter, and identify responsible parties and target deadlines.

Specific project proposals as developed locally, public education efforts, habitat/population assessment and monitoring efforts, research, and staff participation in Local Working Groups (LWG) will be routinely incorporated into agency annual budgets and work plans, as appropriate, and contingent on funding. Agencies, LWGs and other cooperators are also expected to pursue partnership opportunities, to leverage available funding to the greatest extent possible.

Certain elements of this Plan, including fine-, mid- and broad-scale habitat goals and objectives, habitat and population management conservation measures, LWG processes, and habitat and population monitoring techniques will be implemented immediately, where possible. However, implementation of some measures will occur as they are evaluated and incorporated into other plans or processes. For example, mid-scale habitat objectives described in this Plan may not be consistent with agency Land-Use Plans, necessitating further analysis during scheduled Land-Use Plan revision or amendment processes.

6.1 Local Working Group process related milestones

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Identify funding needs and funding sources to implement the State Conservation Plan and LWG plans, including support for LWG facilitators.	SAC, cooperating agencies	December 31, 2006, incorporate new facilitators as soon as possible after funding is secured <i>All groups that requested a facilitator have one in place.</i>
Existing LWGs with draft plans (Shoshone Basin, Jarbidge), should complete and finalize their plans.	LWGs and facilitators	December 31, 2006 <i>See table below.</i>
Existing LWGs that currently do not have draft plans (Challis, West Central) should complete and finalize their plans.	LWGs and facilitators	December 31, 2007 <i>See table below.</i>
Initiate formal LWGs in the South, East and West Magic Valley, Big Desert, East Idaho Uplands and Mountain Home SGPAs. Opportunities may exist for combining some SGPAs into a single LWG, as determined locally.	IDFG Regions	December 31, 2006 <i>Mountain Home LWG has not been initiated.</i>
LWGs provide annual report to SAC.	LWG facilitators or designated lead	Start December 31, 2006, annually thereafter. <i>Done. First Annual LWG Report published in February 2008.</i>

Status of LWG Plans as of October 2008.

Completed Plans	Draft Plans	In Progress	Not Started
Owyhee Jarbidge Upper Snake Challis Curlew	Big Desert East Idaho Uplands West Central (CCAA)	North Magic	South Magic (Mountain Home)

6.2 Conservation measure related milestones

Following are specific conservation measure related milestones identified in this Plan. At present this state Plan does not identify specific milestones for a number of the statewide threats including: infrastructure, livestock impacts, human disturbance, West Nile Virus, prescribed fire, seeded perennial grassland, climate change, conifer encroachment, isolated populations, predation, urban/exurban development, sagebrush control, insecticides, agricultural expansion, Mines, landfills, and gravel pits, and falconry.

6.2.1 Wildfire

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Ensure the BLM/FS Fire Management Plans, Fire Management Unit Databases and related tools are updated annually, based on the most recent Sage-Grouse Habitat Planning Map.	BLM, FS	Annual, before the ensuing fire season BLM: Issued Idaho BLM Instruction Memorandum IM ID-2008-051 on 6/8/2008 directing Districts to update Fire Management Plans and dispatch information with the latest sage-grouse habitat information (2007). Also directed Districts to identify, in GIS, highest priority sage-grouse habitats for use by dispatch.
Require the washing of the undercarriage of fire vehicles and equipment prior to deployment and prior to demobilization from fires, to reduce spread of seeds of invasive species. This item will require additional analysis at the agency level.	BLM, FS	Initiate during 2007 fire season or before. BLM: Idaho Falls and Twin Falls Districts: Page 26 of the Record of Decision (dated 5/2008) for the “Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment” states: “To minimize spread of noxious weeds, equipment used for extended attack or Type I/II incidents should be cleaned before arriving on site and prior to leaving the incident. Staging areas and fire camps should avoid sites with noxious weed infestations.” The 2005 Southwestern Idaho (Boise District) Fire Planning Unit Fire Management Plan (Pages 45-46) reads “Minimize the spread of annual grasses and other invasive non-native species. Equipment used for suppression and prescribed fire will be cleaned before arriving on-site; where possible vehicle wash stations will be set up in base camps. Staging areas and fire camps should be located on sites free of invasive non-native species.”
Require the use of knowledgeable resource advisors for fires within or threatening sage-grouse habitats. This item will require additional analysis at	BLM, FS	Initiate during 2007 fire season or before. BLM: Instruction Memorandum ID-2008-051 (6/2008) emphasizes the use

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
the agency level.		of Resource Advisors knowledgeable about local wildlife habitat concerns on fires within or threatening Key habitat.
Initiate the incorporation of overview training in sage-grouse habitat and related conservation issues, and suppression priorities during annual agency (including RFDs) firefighter training throughout southern Idaho (including Salmon/Challis). This item will require additional analysis at the agency level.	BLM, FS	Initiate during 2007 fire season training, annually thereafter. BLM: Instruction Memorandum ID-2008-051 (6/2008) Directs that managers/fire personnel will ensure that briefings are provided to incident commanders, dispatch and engine bosses early in the fire season regarding the importance of protecting sage-grouse habitat and sagebrush steppe.
Via instruction memorandum or other appropriate process, clarify the use of burn-out tactics in sage-grouse habitat. This item will require additional analysis at the agency level.	BLM, FS	Provide direction prior to the 2007 fire season or before. BLM: Instruction Memorandum ID-2008-051 (6/2008) emphasizes avoiding burn out of islands of unburned sagebrush, and mopping up where safe to do so. Also emphasizes use of the Appropriate Management Response to achieve the highest probability of success and minimize acres burned given resources available.
Identify access roads where the installation of additional fire danger signs may be warranted. Install new signs as needed.	BLM, FS in cooperation with LWGs	Ongoing, but desirable to establish new signs in priority areas during the 2006 fire season, if warranted. BLM: On-going as needed

6.2.2 Annual grasslands

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Require the washing of the undercarriage of fire vehicles and equipment prior to deployment and prior to demobilization from fires, to reduce spread of seeds of invasive species. This item will require additional analysis at the agency level.	BLM, FS	Initiate during 2007 fire season or before. BLM: Idaho Falls and Twin Falls Districts: Page 26 of the Record of Decision (dated 5/2008) for the "Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment" states: "To minimize spread of noxious weeds, equipment used for extended attack or Type I/II incidents should be cleaned before arriving on site and prior to leaving the incident. Staging areas and fire camps should avoid sites with noxious weed infestations."
Explore means to require casual users of public/IDL lands to utilize certified weed-free forage. This item will require additional analysis at the agency level.	BLM, IDL	October 1, 2006 BLM: Delayed. Not implemented.

6.2.3 Sport hunting

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Analyze existing wing data to determine the differences in sex and age of the harvest during opening weekend, compared to later in the season, and summarize other long-term trends.	IDFG	December 31, 2006 Done. See attached "Summary of Sage-grouse Wing Collections."
Identify sage-grouse populations where overharvest is a risk because of isolated or fragmented habitat or small numbers of birds. Develop appropriate 2006 hunting season recommendations to reduce risk.	IDFG	December 31, 2006 For the 2008 season, IDFG used the Hunting Season and Bag-limit Guidelines as provided in the State Plan (Table 4-14, page 4-122).

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6.3 Monitoring related milestones

6.3.1 Population Monitoring

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Identify lek monitoring goals (and primary and secondary lek routes) for SGPAs.	IDFG Regions	December 31, 2006 <i>In development</i>
Explore the potential for initiating the “Adopt a Lek” program for Idaho, to increase monitoring of leks.	IDFG	December 31, 2006 <i>Not done, although the Magic Valley region has had a volunteer lek survey program for the past 2 years.</i>
Agency partners, volunteers submit completed lek monitoring forms to the appropriate IDFG Wildlife Manager or data steward for inclusion into the statewide lek database.	BLM, FS, volunteers conducting lek surveys	No later than June 1 annually <i>Ongoing</i>

6.3.2 Habitat Monitoring

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Establish SAC Technical Assistance Team (TAT), to aid in habitat, population, and data management/analysis tasks.	IDFG HQ, SAC	August 31, 2006 <i>Done</i>
SAC TAT and IDFG coordinate with agency contacts and LWGs during the fall/early winter each year to acquire spatial and related data needed for the annual update of the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map.	SAC TAT, IDFG	Acquire data from agency field-level offices and other partners by February 1 annually <i>Ongoing</i>
Complete annual update of the Sage-grouse Habitat	IDFG, <i>BLM</i>	By March 1,

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
Planning Map including acreage summary (of key perennial grasslands, annual grasslands, conifer encroachment, by SGPA). Post GIS data on the INSIDE Idaho website (Univ. Idaho), Sagemap, and DOI Geography Network.		annually Ongoing
Review adequacy of the 2005 USGS Shrubmap to use as a tool to refine or replace the Sage-grouse Habitat Planning Map.	SAC TAT	December 31, 2007 Shrubmap is not appropriate at this time.
Acquire updated infrastructure spatial data (e.g., new major paved roads, major power lines, communication towers, wind energy towers and related, oil/gas pipelines, geothermal sites etc.). Ensure updated infrastructure GIS product is made available to cooperators via web sites noted above.	SAC TAT, IDFG-HQ GIS	As needed Ongoing
Delineate all known sage-grouse breeding and winter habitat at 1:100,000 (or 1:24,000 if possible), using best available information.	IDFG Regions in cooperation with land management agency biologists and LWGs	December 31, 2007 Initiated September 2008
Evaluate the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing long-term habitat monitoring plots in specific areas such as: areas of priority to LWGs; habitats associated with priority lek routes; priority SGPAs; unique areas of local or regional importance.	IDFG research biologists, in cooperation with LWGs and SAC TAT	December 31, 2006 Not done
Establish a standardized template for LWG annual reports.	SAC TAT	October 31, 2006 Done. First Annual LWG Report published in February 2008.
Establish a database or spreadsheet for summarizing and reporting habitat accomplishments and related information from LWG annual reports and other agency/private projects.	SAC TAT	December 31, 2006 Continue to track projects in USFWS Conservation Efforts Database. Also IDFG database, but need

Category/Task	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
		better monitoring and reporting of habitat accomplishments.

Attachment B

2008 OSC Sage-grouse Proposals

Project Number	Project Name	Applicant	Summary	Score	Funding Requested	Funding Recommended	Start Date	08 Funding Committed	09 Funding Committed
16	Sage-grouse Brood Habitat Study	West Central LWG	Ongoing radio-telemetry study, but proposing to enhance efforts on collaring hens to understand nest-site selection and brood-rearing habitats.	98	\$18,924	\$18,924	1-09	\$0	\$18,924
8	East Idaho Uplands Lek Search & Documentation	East Idaho Uplands LWG	There are few known leks in the East Idaho Uplands Planning Area. Propose to conduct aerial survey for leks in potential sage-grouse habitat and verify with ground crew.	94	\$20,000	\$20,000	3-09	\$0	\$20,000
7	East Idaho Uplands Sage-grouse Telemetry	East Idaho Uplands LWG	Gather baseline data on isolated populations. SAC recommended it would be more efficient to proceed with project #8 first, then radio-collar the following year (2010).	93	\$34,815	\$0	3-10	\$0	\$0
11	Seasonal Movements and Distribution of Greater Sage-grouse	South Magic Valley LWG	Ongoing radio-telemetry study near Oakley.	92	\$20,500	\$10,000	7-08	\$10,000	\$0
17	Square Lake Fencing Project	Wood River Land Trust	Fence land to exclude cattle and improve sage-grouse habitat. SAC recommended the project be revised to provide off-site water for cattle, due to concerns of fence integrity. WITHDRAWN for now.	91	\$17,428	\$23,428	9-08	\$0	\$0
6	South Baldy Riparian Exclosure	Challis LWG	Protect 7.5 acres of late brood-rearing habitat.	89	\$5,200	\$5,200	10-08	\$5,200	\$0
12	SS Cattle Co. Brush Management Project	SS Cattle Co	Use Lawson aerator on dense sagebrush and bitterbrush stands to open up the canopy. Native grasses and forbs will be reseeded.	89	\$26,950	\$26,950	10-08	\$26,950	\$0
2	Big Desert Lek Search and Documentation	Big Desert LWG	Use grouse crews to re-visit historic lek locations.	88	\$5,000	\$5,000	3-09	\$0	\$5,000
18	Reimbursement for Private Vehicle Use	N Magic Valley	Reimburse volunteer lek surveyors for private vehicle miles. Includes South Magic Valley and Jarbidge planning areas as well.	88	\$4,000	\$4,000	5-09	\$0	\$4,000
19	Post Murphy Fire Sage-grouse Investigation	Owyhee LWG	Radio-telemetry project near the Juniper Butte Training Range; investigate sage-grouse movements near the Murphy Complex Fire.	88	\$15,000	\$15,000	3-09	\$0	\$15,000
1	Big Desert Fuel Breaks	Big Desert LWG	Create fuel breaks along roads by rotomowing and road grading to help manage wildfires and protect remaining sagebrush.	87	\$16,000	\$16,000	4-09	\$0	\$16,000
13	Upper Snake Fence Marking	Upper Snake LWG	Add visible markers to fence line previously known to have sage-grouse collisions. SAC recommended coordination with Connelly graduate student project.	86	\$10,000	\$10,000	7-08	\$10,000	\$0
15	A2 Highway Lek Identification and Mitigation	Upper Snake LWG	Rotobeat vegetation to create lekking areas where birds are currently lekking on the road.	84	\$1,795	\$1,795	10-08	\$1,795	\$0
4	Challis Field Office Travel Plan Implementation	Challis LWG	Rip and reseed areas to obscure entrances of newly closed roads. NOT FUNDED.	78	\$9,600	\$9,600	11-08	\$0	\$0
3	Sagebrush Seedlings Planting	Big Desert LWG	Plant sagebrush seedlings in areas previously affected by fires.	77	\$8,000	\$8,000	10-08	\$8,000	\$0
9	Curlew Fence Flagging Project	Greater Curlew Valley LWG	Flag fences near leks and compare collision rate with unflagged fences. SAC recommended coordination with Connelly graduate student project.	71	\$11,400	\$5,000	9-08	\$5,000	\$0
10	Post-fire Restoration of Critical Habitat for the Greater Sage-grouse	South Magic Valley LWG	Restore native vegetation following fire. Proposal was revised to address SAC questions and concerns. Funding requested was also reduced based on the donation of perennial grass seed.	63	\$23,300	\$23,300	10-08	\$23,300	\$0
14	Genetic Marking	Upper Snake LWG	Genetic analysis of sage-grouse at Camas Butte. SAC tabled project until technical review by Connelly.	0	\$10,000	\$0		\$0	\$0
	TOTAL				\$257,912	\$202,197		\$90,245	\$78,924